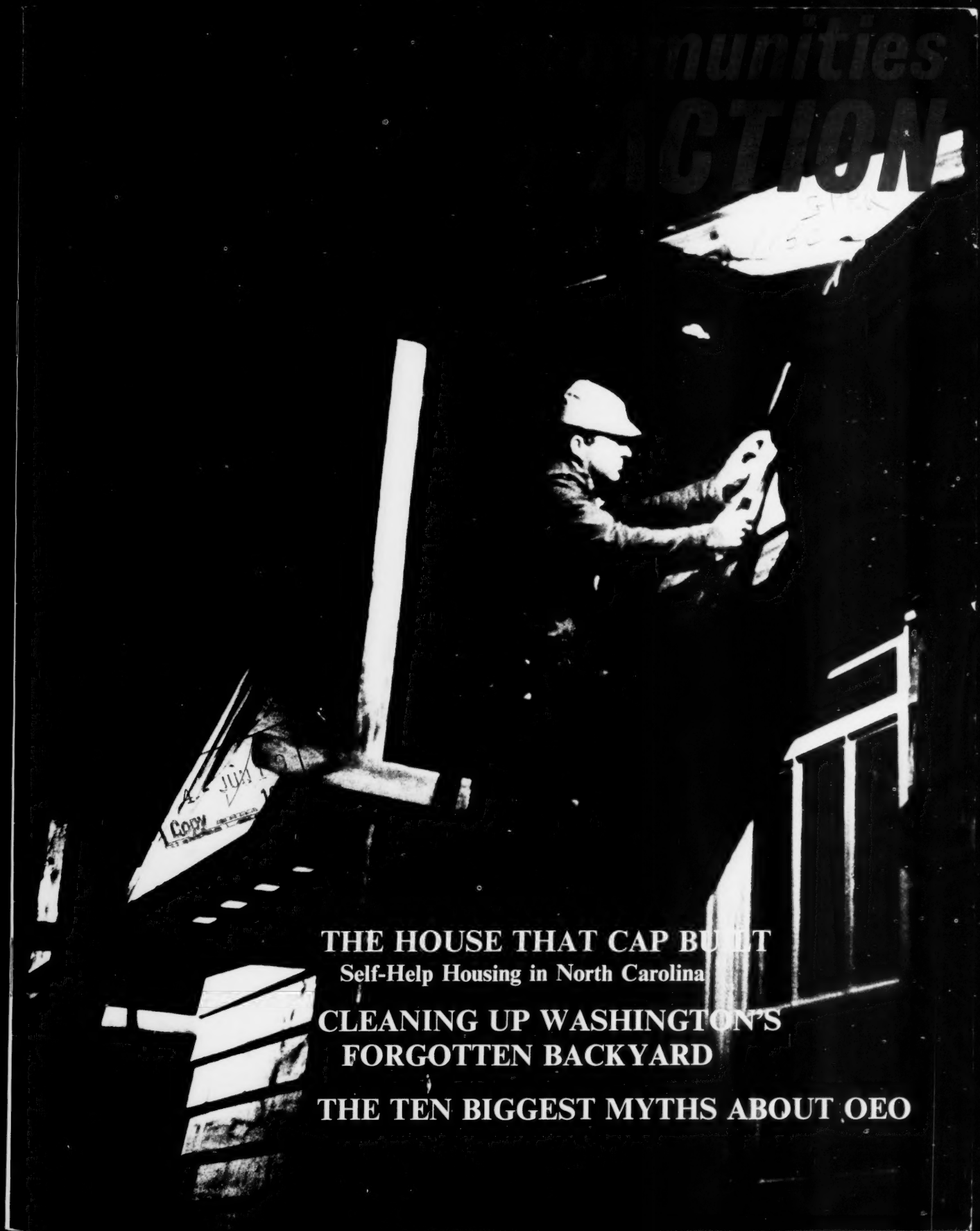

THE HOUSE THAT CAP BUILT

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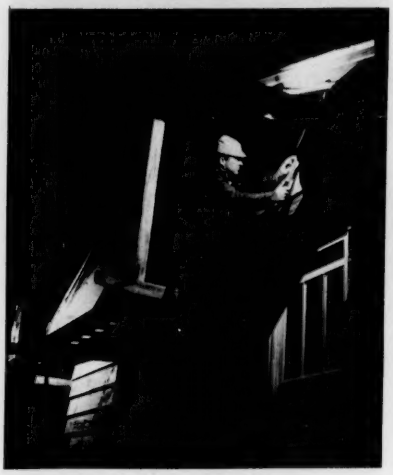

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CAP-inspired Tenants Councils in Capital's Southeast prove the poor can help improve their environments.

Cleaning up Washington's forgotten backyard

In the backyard of the Nation's Capital, across the Anacostia River southeast of the city, a quiet intense war against poverty is being waged even as solons and government executives ponder which way the anti-poverty struggle will turn next.

This is happening in Anacostia, an isolated wilderness, named for the river which divides it from Washington proper. Anacostia is growing fast, faster than any other part of the capital. Land is cheap here. Sprawling apartment complexes have mushroomed in the slopes and valleys. But along with the multiplying new rental property there are pockets of festering poverty.

Most of this housing is for low-income families and is run by the National Capital Housing Authority (NCHA), Washington's public housing agency.

Formerly a low-income white area, Anacostia is rapidly becoming a black ghetto as Whites flee to the Maryland and Virginia suburbs where Negroes are not welcome.

Anacostia residents have many complaints: crowded schools, poor bus transportation, inadequate police protection. But their complaints begin at home, and solutions to some of their problems are beginning there and fanning outward.

Early in 1966, neighborhood workers from the United Planning Organization, Washington's Community Action Agency, which relieves funds from OEO, began knocking on doors in the Barry Farms, a run-down, 23-year-old public housing project, hidden in a valley between a brick apartment building and a freeway.

One neighborhood worker described it this way: "Looking down at Barry Farms from the highway, one would think it was a prison or a concentration camp because of its physical appearance. All the houses look alike and the neighborhood is isolated and segregated from the main activities of the community."

A tenant's group went to NCHA director Walter Washington to ask for bulbs for the court lights. They learned from the director's aides that NCHA had ceased replacing bulbs because kids were forever breaking them.

The tenants then appealed directly to Washington himself. Within two days the lights were replaced.

With this small first triumph, the tenants gained confidence.

When last February NCHA announced its plan to spend $385,000 on improving Barry Farms, the tenants were not ecstatic. They feared the money would be spent on outside repairs rather than on the interior renovation they wanted.

Mrs. Lillian Wright, chairman of the Band of Angels, one of the block clubs which the neighborhood workers had organized, called the NCHA office and was told by a secretary that the director wouldn't see individual tenants.

So the tenants called a press conference and told reporters about their grievances. Mr. Washington then came out to Barry Farms to meet with the tenants but the Band of Angels picketed the meeting. They wanted to meet him downtown in his office.

Some of the other tenants objected to these obstructionist tactics, so the organizers suggested that the long-defunct tenant council be activated and elections held. The Band of Angels won most of the offices.

As a result of the tenant council's discussions with NCHA, a $1.5 million renovation is being carried out in Barry Farms. The outside walls are being sandblasted and painted with waterproof paint, some meas-

ures are being taken to get rid of the rats and extensive repairs are being made inside the apartments.

This was a major victory for the tenants. Since then they have been working primarily with the problem of individual tenants. The talk to them.

Also, once tenants are organized, they know what they want and startle unsuspecting landlords who haven't heard a word from them for years. Many landlords react with fear and resistance.

grievance committee, headed by Mrs. Wright, is trying to make an agreement with NCHA that the tenant council will be recognized as the bargaining agent for the tenants whenever they have grievances.

If NCHA accepts this agreement, a major step will have been taken by tenants and management to sit down and talk to each other and solve problems rationally and responsibly.

Efforts are also being made to form tenant councils in privately owned units. Here the way of tackling problems differs, depending on who owns the property. If one landlord owns all the buildings, the target is easily identified. If the buildings are held by several people, it's sometimes difficult to find out who the real owners are, much less

There's a big difference between the attitude of a public official like Walter Washington who is pleased when tenants speak up, and a property-owner who wants to keep pocketing his rents peacefully and avoid any expenditures for repairs.

The Howard Road tenant council, composed of residents of a 120-unit complex of apartments in four buildings set in two courts, has managed to achieve one major goal by making a compromise with the landlord.

After the council's first meeting with one of the two landlords who owns the property jointly, the halls were painted and other minor repairs were made.

Then the council began asking to have the coal stoves in the apartments replaced with gas heat. "Too expensive," the owners said. The tenants made a survey and found that 84 of the 120 families wanted gas heat.

In late October they picketed the owners' office. On the second day of the picketing, one of the owners said that the tenants who wanted gas heat would have to sign an agreement that they would pay $12.50 per month more rent, plus the cost of the gas. (Most of the tenants were paying about $60 a month rent at the time.) They agreed to the rent increase and the gas heaters are gradually being installed.

Mrs. Katie Ridley, a little woman with a big voice and an understanding of leadership that would make you think she's been working in the community for years, is president of the council. "This is the first time I've done anything like this," she said.

Like many good leaders, she often works from behind the scenes. "Let other people do things. Let them feel they're involved," she

says. When they picketed the owners' offices, the council chose two spokesmen and Mrs. Ridley stayed in the background.

One of the gains of this tenant council is the feeling that the tenants can talk to the owner, the manager and the resident manager, who lives in one of the apartments.

"We don't blame things on the resident manager so much any more," Mrs. Ridley said. "Now we can see his problems because he has to ask for supplies from the office. Now the manager comes to me when the tenants won't cooperate with him. He asks me to get things done."

"And the landlord," she went on, "at least he does speak. The tenant council has brought us closer. He even offered me a ride up the street the other day."

One of the tenant council's first complaints is still a problem, though. All the back door locks in the Howard Road apartments can be opened with the same key. The rental agent said he knew this but since no tenant had ever complained before the council was formed, nothing had been done. Mrs. Ridley is still reminding the owners that the tenants want individual locks.

It's all very well to go to one landlord with grievances, but what do you do in a block with 13 units and five landlords. The tenant council has been trying for months to arrange a meeting with all the landlords.

"The landlords are chicken," said Mrs. Laura Reeder, president of the Morris Road tenant council. 'Every time you talk about a meeting, they get afraid. All we want to do is get acquainted."

That isn't all they want but it would be a starting point.

On Morris Road there is a line of row houses perched on a steep hill. The houses are about 15 years old, shoddily constructed and poorly maintained. Each building has three apartments. The one-bedroom apartments on the first and second floors rent for $65 to $70 a month, utilities not included. Gas heat runs about $20 a month in the winter.

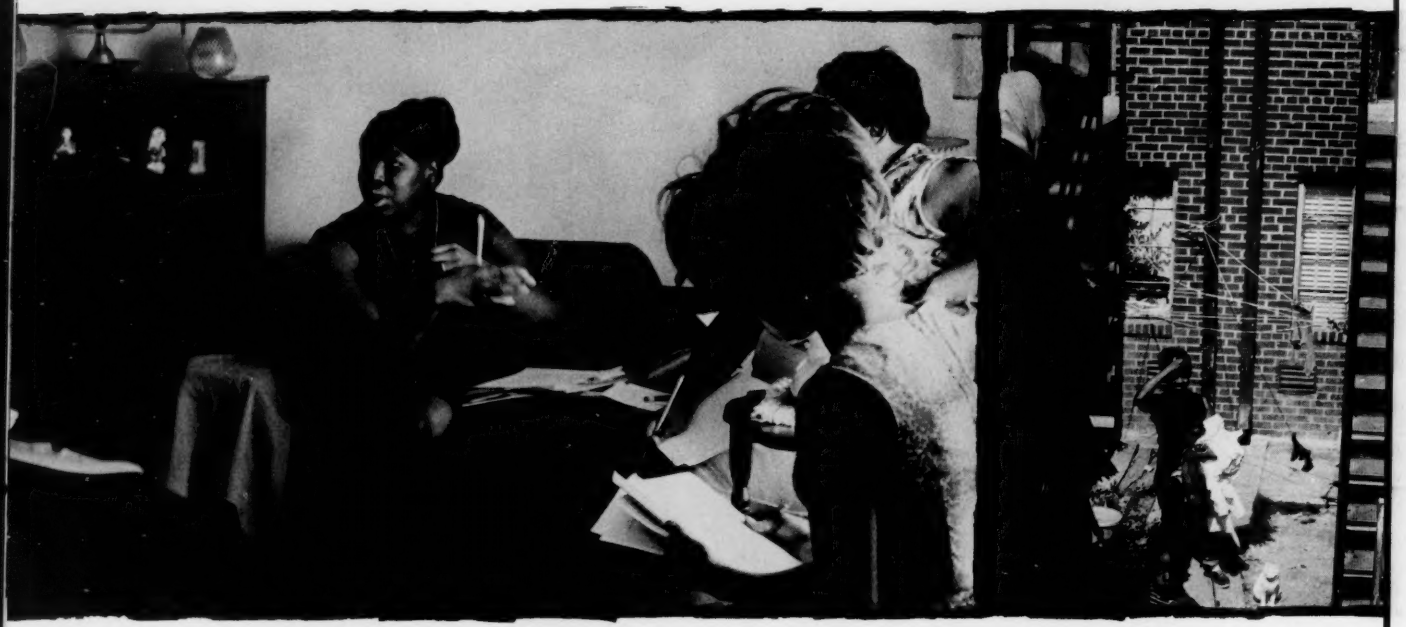
One of the landlords met with the tenants and made some repairs. He replaced the broken windows and painted the doors and hallways. Another also did some painting. A third agreed to replace broken windows the first time they were broken.

Behind the buildings is a narrow space between the back doors and a steep slope leading up to a wooded area. One landlord has cleaned up this little space behind his two buildings. He has removed the trash from the ground and placed a big, freshly-painted green oil drum beside each back door to be used as a garbage can.

You can hardly walk out the back doors of the other buildings. The yards are piled with all kinds of trash—bottles, cans, milk cartons, old newspapers. The area is not paved; unevenly packed dirt turns into a sea of mud when it rains. Just outside some of the back doors are rotting wood platforms but from others you walk

right out into the dirt. Open cement stairways lead to the basement apartments.

Since there is a steep slope in front and mud, trash and unsafe open stairs behind, children on Morris Road have no place to play.



The tenant council would like to make a playground out of an unpaved parking lot at one of the group of houses.

This will mean trying to get the D.C. Recreation Department to pave the lot and raise money for playground equipment. One landlord has said he will donate money for swings.

The Morris Road group is the newest of these three tenant councils. There are many others in the area as well—in both public and private housing. The public housing tenants have banded together in a city-wide tenants union to meet with NCHA officials and present the grievances of all the public housing tenants.

The Morris Road council hasn't yet been strengthened by a significant achievement. But the Howard Road and Barry Farm councils have; both are in the process of being incorporated and leaders have future goals beyond simply improving the buildings where they live.

"We want a clinic for the neighborhood and a Head Start program for the children in Barry Farms," said Mrs. Mary Taylor, president of the Barry Farms tenant council. She also remarked that there is a vacant lot at one corner of the housing project and that the nearest food store is several blocks away, small and very expensive. "Maybe some day we can run our own store," she said.

Mrs. Ridley has similar ideas in mind. She talked about fixing up an old bus or trailer as a small cooperative store where people could buy milk, bread and detergent. The store nearest her is almost a mile away.

"If the incorporation comes through, we can start a nursery," she said, "rent one of the apartments and have mothers take turns taking care of the children."

The achievements of the tenant councils have had significant effects on people. There is foot-dragging, of course; people don't show up for meetings; squabbles occur, but when something is happening, interest flares up again.

"People get disgusted with a lot of meetings," Mrs. Taylor said, "but if you have something real, something tangible, people get excited. You have to get behind people; then first thing you know, they're behind you."

And Mrs. Ridley got down to the most basic force that has been unleashed by community action when she said, "The people who usually talk for us don't know what we need. They get to do all the talking. We need to talk direct to the people we need things from."

—Carol Williams

THE WATERSHED

A New Look at the War on Poverty

"Please understand that there is no one depressed in this house. We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat. They do not exist," said Queen Victoria to her ministers after early campaign failures in the Boer War. Likewise, we at the Office of Economic Opportunity are not depressed. We are fighting a moral war, a war involving all America, and the possibilities of defeat must not exist.

Six months ago the press said that Mr. Shriver was barely hanging onto his job, that the President had lost interest in OEO's anti-poverty program. Congress bit into last year's budget request of $1.75 billion by $150,000,000, and this year there are 47 new Republican Congressmen, who, it was assumed, would be against the program.

The gloommongers were to be confounded. On March 14 President Johnson sent his first Presidential message to Congress on the Poverty Program. It was a strong, detailed reaffirmation of the President's intention to eradicate poverty in America. The message supported each of OEO's programs, and asked Congress for over $2 billion for the year starting July 1. It made no mention of spinning off anything; OEO is to stay in charge of its programs.

To be sure, it remains to be seen what Congress will do about the President's message and bill on OEO. Two Republicans, Albert Quie of Minnesota and Charles Goodell of New York, on April 10 introduced their own poverty legislation, which for openers calls for "dismantling the Office of Economic Opportunity under Sargent Shriver." Despite such suggestions, OEO believes there are good reasons why the President's confidence is justified. They include what we call (1) the **turnabout** and (2) the **echo effect.**

The Turnabout

The War on Poverty has been in existence a little more than two years. Rarely has an infant been subjected to such wallops at a tender age. Few people, even those nasty and brutish, were willing to attack the idea of getting the poor man to help himself *per se*. All agree it is a good thing if ghettos can be abolished, if people can be taken off welfare rolls and put to work, if wayward youths can be straightened out and made into useful productive citizens before they become number 7884403862.

The attack had to be a flanking action, not a frontal one. This was done by saying, "In theory the War on Poverty is a good thing, but we just can't afford it with Vietnam." Cuts are made in the spirit of economy.

Look, however, at the facts.

Americans spend *four* times as much *each year* on alcoholic beverages (12.9 billion—1965) as the entire two and one-half year War on Poverty has cost. *Twice* as much is spent on tobacco *each year* (4.3 billion—1965) than the OEO budget. Likewise, more was spent on TV commercials in 1966 ($2.765 billion) than in all the OEO anti-poverty efforts.

American not only *can* afford the war, America wastes more money in frivolity than the entire cost of OEO programs.

This fact has been recognized by many influential groups across the nation. Last year at the annual conference of Mayors, the Mayors united in requesting the President and members of Congress to "recognize the severe deficiencies in funds to meet program levels," and urged a supplemental appropriation be made to OEO. Another important organization of cities, The National League of Cities, expressed in December by resolution their support of the anti-poverty program and called for an expansion.

This was all the more dramatic as the year before, the National League of Cities had passed an unfavorable resolution. The American Bar Association has swung solidly behind OEO. Six leading members of the American Bar Association are members of the Advisory Council to the Legal Services Program which provides legal services for the poor in ghettos and rural areas.

The American Bar Foundation, an affiliate of ABA, is doing research into the legal needs of the poor. Still another affiliate of the ABA, the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association, sends two field men all over the United States as technical assistance advisors for development of legal service programs.

In addition many members of the American Medical Association, including its president, Dr. Charles Hudson, are working with OEO.

Look Magazine, in its issue of March 21, 1967, contained an article entitled "The Revolution in Medicine" and told of the setting up of three neighborhood health centers in Denver, Boston and New York City. In Denver alone, the staff clocked 51,000 visits. Included on the Denver staff are 60 neighborhood aides who run the switchboard, drive the microbuses that haul patients to the Center, get-on-the-job training experience for future careers in social service, mental and environmental health, laboratory techniques and home economics. These 60 are climbing out of slum life while they carry out the War on Poverty's basic idea: Let the poor lead the poor out of poverty.

The same week the "San Francisco Chronicle" told of a plan for the San Francisco Medical and Dental Societies to sponsor jointly with OEO a $1.5 million health care center.

Why the turnabout? The program is making progress and its impact is being felt. In its first two years the War on Poverty has benefited more than 9 million Americans. More than 3,000 of the 3,132 counties of the United States have had some OEO activity.

When OEO came into being two years ago there were 34.3 million poor people in the United States. There are now 32.7 million poor. The decrease is due partly to the performance of the economy and the resulting increase in jobs. But many of the poor people who got those jobs were trained and placed through OEO and other coordinated government programs.

Specifically:

—1.3 million young children have benefited in summer and year-around Head Start programs.

—800,000 young men and women have participated in the Neighborhood Youth Corps.

—4 million poor people have obtained needed services through Neighborhood Centers.

—60,000 young men and women have received basic education and vocational training in Job Corps centers.

—140,000 adults, most of them on public assistance before OEO, have received work experience.

—3,500 VISTA Volunteers are in service to the poor across the country.

—33,700 rural loans have been approved.

—22,400 students have prepared for college in 224 institutions of higher education through Upward Bound.

These statistics are more than lifeless numbers; they represent an awakening of the human spirit. They talk about a misshapen child who was little more than a vegetable until he got the proper medical treatment. They talk of an 18-year-old boy who had been in and out of minor scrapes with the law all of his life and who had never worked, but who is now earning $1.71 an hour turning a lathe, and who is coming to work on time and working hard. They talk of the father of five who had been on relief for seven straight years, but who is now earning a decent wage and of his family who now have pride and joy in living.

Echo Effect

What is being done is not limited to OEO, nor is it limited to the various delegate agencies. Other institutions and organizations are carefully watching the ground being broken by OEO and are stepping in the tracks. This is the "echo effect." For example:

—The great success of the Head Start program has led to an increased public awareness of the educational needs of poor children and is largely responsible for the increased support of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which was enacted in 1965.

—The Follow-Through program recommended in Fiscal Year 1968 for children starting to school is a direct result of the knowledge gained in the preschool program.

—The idea of rent supplements now embodied in a full federal program got its first trial in a Com-

munity Action Program in New York City.

—States without mandatory preschool education have either passed or are considering such mandatory legislation as a result of Head Start.

—School systems are paying far more attention than ever before to parent involvement and home environment as a result of Head Start.

—Institutions of higher learning are training teachers for the special field of poverty through special courses, internships and field projects.

—The authorization of the Teacher Corps by the Congress was boosted by special education efforts by OEO in poor areas.

—Job Corps educational material has been distributed to 84 educational establishments, including public, parochial and teacher institutions, and is already being used in almost half of these.

—The Department of Defense is using Job Corps techniques and materials as part of its new educational program for young men of limited educational background.

OEO developed the concept of multi-purpose neighborhood centers in urban ghettos and in areas of rural poverty. The purpose of these centers is to provide certain basic services within the neighborhood and refer the poor, as necessary, to other services in the community. Legal services, health services, job training and other manpower programs would be coordinated through the one center. President Johnson has directed that several of these neighborhood centers be established in the major ghettos around the nation, and has asked that Health, Education and Welfare, Labor, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and OEO cooperate and coordinate their activities out of these centers.

Volunteers now in training in the Job Corps are learning to read 25 percent faster than the national school norm. They are learning mathematics at an even faster pace.

Other thoughts

As important as the turnabout and the echo effects are, it is well to keep in mind that they are in essence reflections of a successful program. They do not necessarily show a broad public acceptance. It still remains to be seen pragmatically whether America will live up to her promise.

We have long told ourselves that we are not only the most moral nation in the world, but also that we live the best economically. In reality both of these are open to serious question.

How moral is a nation that spends more on television advertisements than on trying to help the one-fifth of her population living in squalor and misery? Why is it that our cities are blighted with cancerous slums when this is not true in many European cities? How is it that there are slums in Houston, yet none in Stockholm? Why are there great pockets of unemployed men in Philadelphia, yet none in Copenhagen? How much attention have we truly paid to our Judeo-Christian heritage of helping others less fortunate than ourselves?

We have long boasted of having the world's best medical care. But *Look* pointed out in the earlier mentioned article on the medical revolution that actually we rank far below less affluent countries. In preventing infant deaths, the U. S. stands tenth; in deaths from diabetes, fourteenth; from heart disease, thirteenth; in overall deaths, fifth. And in prolonging life, we are number eight.

But the signs are good that the slumbering American conscience has been aroused. Today in communities across the country there are 375,000 non-paid volunteers who are assisting OEO workers. These volunteers cut across every strata of American life; they contribute their time, energy and influence for one reason only—because it is right and fitting to do so. This is the largest citizen's army in peace-time history.

And a Harris poll of April 4 shows that the American public is now 60 percent behind the War on Poverty, which is almost twice as much support as we received seven months ago. Also more people want increases in the poverty program than want increases in several federal programs, including such usually favored ones as highway construction and space. (Some 23 percent of Americans want OEO efforts expanded, while 22 percent favor expansions in the highway construction, and 13 percent favored more funds to space.)

All of these are sound enough reasons for an intellectual, as well as a stomach belief, that we will win.

Harold Young, administrative assistant of the then Vice President Henry Wallace, was once asked by Mr. Wallace, "Who is Dorothy Parker?" Young replied that Miss Parker is a noted wit, the sort of writer who will write that she had a visit with Henry Wallace and in future years someone reading that passage will ask, 'Who is Henry Wallace'?"

In like fashion, years from now the critics of OEO will be forgotten, but the people OEO has trained and the communities OEO has assisted will be very much apparent.

—PHILIP HARDBERGER
Special Assistant to
Director Sargent Shriver

"...a last first chance!"

Leon Sullivan describes the OIC training approach

"Integration without preparation is frustration." That's the way Rev. Leon H. Sullivan sees the struggles of the unskilled for employment. He sees himself as one of the strongest forces behind a movement which gives the disadvantaged the preparation they need.

Testifying to his ideas during the recent investigation of the crises in our cities by the Ribicoff Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, the pastor made headlines. His words carry weight, for Leon Sullivan was born in, was raised in, a back alley of Charleston, West Virginia, where poverty reigned royal.

Today, at age 45, Rev. Sullivan is minister to the 5,000 members of the Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia. He has been "discovered" by magazines like "Time" as good, fresh material for articles on the self-made and dedicated man.

But the real news is not Rev. Sullivan's personal success story nor his likable talent for saying the quotable thing—"Girls don't have to be blondes to be beautiful. We must unwash brain-washed minds."

The news rather is how Rev. Sullivan has enacted his ideas, what he is doing to help the poor. A couple years ago in Philadelphia, he began a job preparation program that combines work skill training with basic education and attitude improvement. The success of this program has led to extensive funding by the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Labor and private foundations to begin similar centers—all called Opportunity Industrialization Centers—in poverty ghettos across the United States.

What follows is an interview with Rev. Sullivan who tells, in the way he as the originator sees it, how OIC's operate and what they offer that is unique to them. Rev. Sullivan also offers "Communities in Action" readers his own opinions about the need for OIC-type programs.

Q: Rev. Sullivan, when did you start the first OIC center?

A: January the 26th, 1964, here in the city of Philadelphia.

I started it in an old abandoned jail house in the heart of the main poverty section of our city. There were no lights, no power, no heat, no windows, no floors; and the building had been standing in about 4 inches of water.

Our city, through the city council, gave me the building for $1 a year to develop a skill training center. The city council passed an ordinance that was signed by the mayor, and I took the building.

Q: How many centers are there in Philadelphia now?

A: Six. Four of them are skill training centers—one on 19th Street and another in West Philadelphia in a seven-story building that was given to me by a Buck's County farmer who heard about the work and wrote me a postcard indicating he was interested in helping. When I followed up the card, just to acknowledge receipt, I found out he was a multi-millionaire; and he gave me a seven-story building.

Emphasis in this center is on merchandizing training skills as well as secretarial skills, IBM, some electronic training. We have our first Univac. The Remington-Rand Corporation gave us, just a few months ago, a $350,000 computer to train people in computer maintainance and computer programming.

Then I have another center in the Germantown section of Philadelphia where I'm training people in building skills—and some other skills. There's a center in South Philadelphia where we train in a variety of technical areas.

Then I have a "feeder" program in the center of the city. It's a huge facility where we train hundreds of people at a time—there are 800 people enrolled in that center as of today. We have prevocational training to prepare people to from two weeks to three months to get ready to go to an OIC skill center.

I call it a "feeder" program. It's the first time it's ever been done in the world.

And there's another center, which I call the developmental center, a small center in the Spanish-speaking section of our city. So there are six centers operating now in Philadelphia.

Q: How many centers in the United States?

A: Well, you have nine cities that have received government funding—that's on top of the money and equipment that has come from local resources. In addition to that number, the nine—that is eight and Philadelphia—I have programs in 56 additional cities now running with local resources. Between now and November these will be ready for massive governmental funding.

In other words, we have programs now in 65 cities in America; and also, interest in and OIC groups organizing in several countries in Latin America and Mexico.

Q. What is the relationship between OIC's and CAP's in the cities where they are located?

A: OIC's are always tied into the local Community Actions Programs. In fact, OIC's are delegate agencies of CAP's.

This is the way I want it.

I didn't want the programs detached off in a corner as a separate poverty program. I wanted them to be a part of the *total* poverty effort in a community because I realize that we're in one big war and Shriver is one big general; and we don't need several armies in one town because sometimes they can start fighting among each other and lose the war.

Q: Then you think CAP's are important for uniting the different parts of the poverty war?

A: The most affectability that can come out of your poverty program in the cities will occur when there's more unity of action, and where you have a good "esprit de corps" among all your anti-poverty units.

Q: How do you get people to come into OIC centers?

A: Well, OIC's start in the community. The first OIC groups are comprised of community leaders who have rapport—individuals who are church leaders, ministers, persons who have been civil rights leaders, people whom the community identify with as persons unquestionably interested in their welfare.

Through our network of communication these individuals and the organizations they represent are able to touch any number of people in any community that we ever choose.

For example, if we wanted to reach, say, 50 percent of a target area, we could reach them within a 9-day period by just accelerating our communications through our network of communication and interpretation—through churches or organizations or civil rights groups or fraternal groups or through the network of barbershop or beauty shop communication.

One of the great strengths of OIC's is their extraordinary capacity to reach any number of people at any time to inform them about a given program.

Q: Are most of these people you reach and then train employed or unemployed?

A: Both employed and unemployed —mostly unemployed.

In the night program there is a considerable number of people who have jobs during the day but are seeking to learn the skills to upgrade their abilities and their job opportunities.

During the day you have, for the most part, people who are totally unemployed, people who are very much unprepared, people who are looking for what we call a "last first-chance."

Q: How much training and education have most of these people had?

A: The average mean grade of the OIC enrollees is the eighth grade. The average age of enrollees is 28.

Q: When someone comes into a center "fresh off the streets," what will first happen to him? What is he greeted by?

A: All OIC centers are characterized at the in-take point by an intensive counseling force—not only professional counselors but counselor aides, who don't have the professional proficiency and training but who are trained in the in-service counselor training program to help them to be counselor aides.

And some of them, incidentally, are better counselors than professional counselors.

So the people first meet the counselors.

From that point, we take their applications, which consist of nothing stringent or examinational—just basic information.

Then we put them into the "feeder" program where they are made ready for training, and then into a training program, and then into a job.

In Philadelphia we deal with 3,500 to 4,000 people a year. We are dealing with that many now.

We have 7000 people on our waiting list because we don't have the money or resources to expand our program—which we are capable of doing, but we don't have the resources.

Q. Are most of your enrollees Negro?

A: Negro. OIC started in a Negro community.

Now hundreds of the people are White and Spanish-speaking people. OIC, as Sargent Shriver said, is becoming an American solution to an American problem. I think he's right.

My real concern at first was to help Negroes—almost my chief

preoccupation in developing the program; I didn't realize that not only Negroes need this program but all Americans need it.

Of course, our staffs are totally integrated. And in some of our centers—for example, in Menlo Park, California, a considerable number of our trainees are non-Negro; and in Seattle, Washington, there is a large number of Eskimos and Mexican-Americans as well as Caucasians. In Oklahoma City there are many Indians, of course.

Q. Where do you get personnel to conduct the training?

A: This is hard. Personnel isn't easy. Since this is a new program, we have to disengage people from other situations. Now we don't necessarily want to do that because it makes problems for other educational programs.

So we have to find available resources that are not being used, and we have to just make what we need.

We have found that OIC can train quality leadership fast. It's because we have intensive in-service training programs for all people who become a part of our staff.

Of course, we get many people from school systems, some from industry and from social service employment. But we like to beat bushes for people who are not in those fields now so we won't deplete the employment market and create problems for other agencies.

Q: What job skills have you found to be most in demand?

A: Industry—machinist, machine

shop jobs, machine tool jobs, sheet metal jobs, teletype operating jobs. Clerical and stenographic, of course. The electronics areas, such as electronic assembly, and electronic technicians. And then, textiles—pile machine operating—there's a vast amount of that in our specific section. And for electricians, bricklayers, for plumbers and drafters.

We teach in 30 areas of skills; and we only teach in areas where there are jobs available and where there is need.

Q: Then you have a list of employers just waiting . . .

A: Yes. Employers through the support of the local Chamber of Commerce are receptive and very sympathetic to the work of OIC. Not to do something humanitarian for us. We're not interested in companies doing something humanitarian for us or being nice to us—to give a couple jobs because they want to be nice.

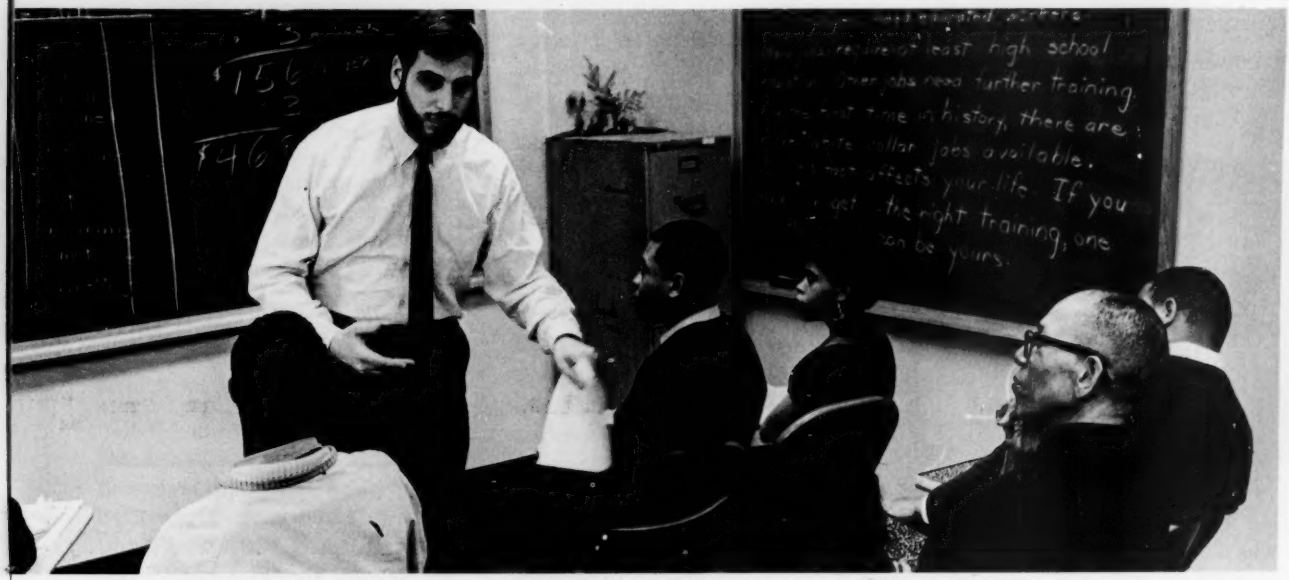
These companies are employing OIC trainees because OIC trainees measure up. Matter of fact, they bring to the job an attitude that is hard to find in the community; because OIC teaches skills 50 percent of the time and attitude the other 50 percent of the time.

We have OIC people—people who've been through the program—working now in 280 companies.

Q: Let's talk about money—or the use of it. Considering the frugal amount of money available for the total war on poverty, do you think that more of that money should be used for work training programs than is being used for such programs?

A: I'm not critical of any use that has been made of the money because Mr. Shriver knows what the problems are better than I; but more funds are going to have to go into these kinds of programs because the only way you can lick poverty—unless you want to wait 40 and 50 years—is by making a man who is in poverty now capable of getting a job in our technological society. Otherwise he becomes a dole and drag on the economy. This individual has to be trained to do a job in today's kind of work-world so he can earn a salary to take care of his family—so his family can continue its education and be ready a generation, or two generations, from now to stand on its feet rather than be in the cycle of poverty. So, the main way that poverty can be licked is through OIC-type programs.

As a matter of fact, I'll be as bold as this—without being critical of any other poverty program—OIC programs are going to have to be established—either the "feeder" or total action program—in every community of any size in America in order to reach the real root of the problem; and I say this not because I am the person who initiated the program, created this type of thing, but because we are finding all over



America this is true.

Even now Community Action leaders and administrators are saying, "We want OIC." Now this is not because my public relations is so good—although it's pretty good at that, you know—but because the program is proving itself to be a main factor in the alleviation of poverty and crime.

Take Philadelphia. This year Philadelphia is the only large center where crime is definitely on the decrease. OIC has taken off of the street corners literally hundreds of people who otherwise would have been involved in some sort of anti-social behavior.

This is a fact because OIC's are now getting right down into the hard core of our community so people who have a tendency to become involved in criminal activities no longer do because they're not on the street corners. They're working in jobs or they're training in OIC.

There are 1,600 people in training in OIC's now, right now. You take that, with the 3,500 who are working on jobs, and you're dealing with 5,000 people, many of whom—not all, not all—but many of whom are part of the problem in Philadelphia.

So if you're able, out of 5,000, to touch 750 people, men and women, who might have been a part of some anti-social or criminal situation, you are actually causing a decrease in the whole crime per-

centage because a very small percentage of the people are involved in crime, and they are usually the people who are unemployed or who are underemployed.

Q: You say you have 3,500 people on jobs. How many graduates do you have?

A: More than 3,500. We've been able to place around 90 percent of our training.

Q: 90 percent?

A: Yes—which is phenomenal. Nobody believes it, but it's true.

The other 10 percent? Well, you know. Nothing is perfect.

Q. Right, but are there specific reasons why this 10 percent wasn't employed?

A: Well, nothing is perfect.

I mean, this is the highest placement in the country, in the world, that we know of in a training program.

Q: But I wondered if there were specific placement problems.

A: What happens with the other 10 percent to be 100 percent perfect? Well, there are some people who become pregnant, you have some people that you lose track of, there are some people who go back to their homes, you have some people that just don't make it even after OIC training. The number's so small.

Q: You've had a great deal of help from private foundations. Do you think that CAP's, as a practical consideration, can count on financing by private foundation money? Do you think that the United States is in a state now where the private sector is willing to provide for higher and higher local shares?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so.

I think programs such as OIC or indigenously organized programs can secure foundation support. A government agency, because people can't see government agencies as needing private support—they say the government is the people, you see; they say they're giving two times. But for programs that are self-help programs, *self*-help programs created out of the community—that organization can get philanthropic and public support because it's not seen as a government program.

One of the big values of OIC's is that people don't see it as a government program. They see it as a community program with government support.

Q: . . . and this helps in getting people to enroll in the program?

A: Oh, there's no question about it.

You see, the government had manpower programs for 40 years but people will come to OIC who never would go to a government program. It's because OIC has a capacity to motivate people into their program because they are programs of the people, by and for the people.

—PATRICIA SMITH

"...so many old folks in one place so happy."

Arkansas Senior Center is Successful Community Action!

The slap of cards sounds from three corners of the big room and in the fourth a white-haired man, with a pipe and black cap, trounces two opponents in simultaneous checker games.

A dozen people are watching the television set against the east wall and laughing with a studio audience at one of those daytime game shows.

One fragile little lady knits as she waits her turn to play her bridge hand; several others do fancy work as they "kibitz" from comfortable chairs nearby.

It doesn't take a newcomer long to find out where the action is in the pretty mountain resort city of Hot Springs, Arkansas. It's in the heart of downtown, at the Senior Citizens Center on Central Avenue,

During the past six months, the Center has had more than 43,000 visitors—and this in a city with a total population of approximately 38,000!

Edwin Doulin, director of the Council of Economic Opportunity for Hot Springs and Garland County, and Lora Buckingham, director of the Center, expected it to succeed, but even they are astonished at the extent of success.

"There are people here seven days a week, from early morning until we close the doors at ten at night," says Lora.

"The wonderful thing is that it has given so many elderly people a new lease on life," she adds. "They are all retired. Most live alone and have very little to look forward to. You would be surprised how many of them have no one, no family at all. On their registration cards, instead of next of kin, they list the funeral home where they have made arrangements for burial."

"You ought to see how the Center changes the appearance of most of them," adds Doulin. "The first time the men come in, a lot of them are seedy-looking, in need of a shave. The next time you see them, they're all spruced up and wearing their Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes."

"Ladies, too," says Lora. "They start wearing makeup, and the first thing you know, they're smiling and talking to everybody in sight. And they form strong attachments—one lady always waits for a certain gentleman, and she gets real angry if anybody else sits in 'his' seat!"

The Senior Citizens Center in Hot Springs, only one in the five Southwestern states, was the first project to be undertaken by the OEO-funded Council of Economic Opportunity. Planning for it got underway in March 1966, based on a community survey undertaken two years earlier by a United Fund subsidiary.

That survey showed what local citizens had long suspected—that Hot Springs may very well have the oldest population median of any city in the nation. Approximately 25 percent of its citizens are over 65 years of age.

It also showed that most of these elderly people were not natives—that they had come to Hot Springs because they were retired, and because they had been told they could live there comfortably on modest pensions or on retirement income.

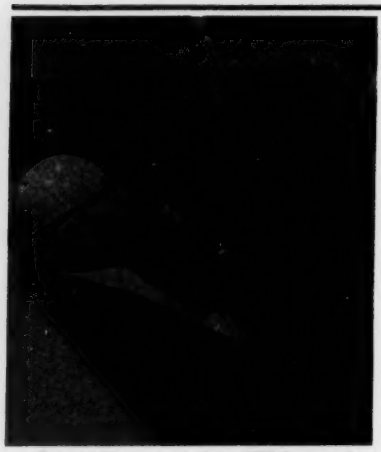
For some reason, a majority of retired settlers in Hot Springs come from Chicago, although there is at least one person from nearly every Northern state, including sparsely-settled Nebraska and Wyoming.

Most of the elderly live in modest downtown hotels, paying $25 to $40 a month for single rooms with hot plate privileges, in an area where groceries and other shops are accessible to the pedestrian. Many save their pennies to enjoy a weekly mineral water bath at one of Hot Springs' famous bathhouses, and they swear to the beneficial results on such diseases of the elderly as arthritis.

Before the Center opened in July, these people could be seen in large

numbers, sitting idly in their hotel lobbies or wandering aimlessly along the downtown streets.

Few had the strength or the energy to climb the mountain overlooking the city, to picnic in its delightful little parks or look out over the city from the tower to the top. Few had the money to enjoy the famous horse races which are run in the spring. Scores haunted the post office for mail that never comes.



According to the CEO study: "The morale of those interviewed was found to be very low where they were living alone in furnished rooms. . . . It was also noted that those living alone who don't wander the streets interminably spend their days in their rooms just staring off into space.

"Few have radios or TV sets, and not many even read newspapers unless they are able to "'cadge" them from others. A very small number used the public library, mainly because they said it was too far away. . . .

"There are about 25 restaurants downtown serving blue plate dinners for as low as 65 cents. Most elderly tried to have at least one hot meal a day, generally at noon. Breakfast or supper were not regular meals except early in the month.

"As the month wore on, from about the 25th to the 31st, the hot meal had to be skipped by many who had no credit available. . . . With average monthly income set at $82.42, and minimum rent $25, the average amount left to provide food, clothing, medical care and incidentals was $57.42 . . . or less than $2.00 per day."

The Center opened July 1, 1966, in the old Mellard Building at 915 Central Avenue—a well-built, two-story brick structure containing 6,000 square feet of floor space. It was leased "as is" for $5,400 annually, and the staff planned to repaint and refurbish it a room at a time.

The opening was a mob scene—hundreds and hundreds of old people showed up, stopping traffic and spilling out onto the sidewalks. Townspeople stopped to stare, wondering what was going on and adding to the general confusion.

Since that day, the senior citizens have kept coming in increasing numbers, and they have made the Center their own—their club, their living room, their school, their library, their restaurant, their entertainment, their real retirement "home."

On a typical cool February morning, a visitor clicked off 153 arrivals on the handcounter at the receptionist's desk, between 10 a.m. and noon.

There are more than 1,700 "registered" members — widows, widowers, occasional couples and bachelors and old maids—who habitually frequent the center. Many of them work there occasionally as aides; there are presently 35 who work 20 hours a week each, helping in the classrooms and the kitchen, or aiding with maintenance of the property.

Many are foreign-born; the Chicago retirees includes Poles, Czechs, Bulgarians and Germans. One Hungarian woman who has been in this country five years, and who speaks three languages fluently, is trying to master English with the aid of the adult education teacher, Mrs. Jean Laseter. She wants to get her citizenship papers. Twelve others are learning to read English.

In the second floor classroom, other members are working at arts and crafts projects—rug-making, mosaics, leatherwork. A discussion group which started off with some lively political arguments has now turned its attention to religion, and is hearing in turn a Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi and a fundamentalist Protestant minister.

One staff member is conducting an income tax counseling service (so great is the Center's popularity now that well-to-do retirees come to it from the resort hotels).

Eight of the part-time aides, led by a Negro Baptist minister, Rev. Otto Carr, conduct the Center's shut-in service. They work four hours a day, and each visits seven or eight senior citizens who are handicapped or otherwise bedridden by illness. They write letters, shop for the invalids, perform other needed personal services. Mostly, they offer lonely shut-ins someone to talk to.

"Mental health counseling is one of our most important services,"

says Lora. "Many times older people worry about their health, their finances, their families if they have any. Sometimes there is no real problem but we encourage them to talk it out anyway. If we can help, we do, but just letting them talk about it seems to do more good than anything else. They always say they feel better afterward."

In the kitchen, a 78-year-old chef is king; he performs culinary miracles with the surplus commodity foods served in the Center

dining room. A 68-year-old dietitian does the planning, and four spry ladies serve as waitresses (two at a time) on alternate days. Coffee and doughnuts are a nickel; the noon meal costs 40 cents, and to the astonishment of administrators these plus the coke machine have piled up a $3,600 bank deposit.

"A little embarrassing," says

Doulin, "but we need so many things, we'll find a good use for it."

Lora points out a dapper gentleman getting coffee; he was once the trusted employee and friend of multimillionaire William Randolph Hearst and his friend, Marion Davies, and lived in the Hearst castle on the West Coast.

Over in the corner, lunching at a small table, are two old cowpokes, one from Colorado and one from Montana. Lora says there was little communication there at first—professional jealousy, maybe, or both perhaps just strong, silent outdoorsmen.

Now however, they yarn away together and even include the crowd in their reminiscences, such as how the Indians tanned hides with the slain animal's brains.

In the small library, a dozen old gentlemen crowd chairs together, limiting floor space. Mrs. Ruth Stell, a retired high school English teacher and librarian, agreed to operate the library on the usual 20-hours-per-week-basis, but usually puts in 30 or more. She has four aides, each of whom works 12 hours per week.

There are presently about 900 volumes in the little library, many of them contributed by interested townspeople and other organizations. Most of the rest were purchased at a 25 percent discount. An additional 250 books are on order.

"We had nothing to go by when we started collecting, and we had a few surprises," says Mrs. Stell, an attractive and articulate woman. "These people are not interested in building or gardening, the usual 'hobby' books. The women don't care for periodicals such as the *US News and World Report, Newsweek, Time* and *Turf,* a horseracing magazine.

"Some of them follow the stock market avidly. For solid reading, they request philosophy, theology, history and biographies. The ladies borrow some fiction but mostly they ask for books on nature and animals, some want history. Oddly enough, the ladies don't read here in the library—only at home. The library itself is a 'for-men-only' club."

During its first month of operation, the library attracted 714 borrowers; in December, it had 2,471. With the addition of some "back-home" newspapers — the *Sunday New York Times,* the *Chicago Tribune,* the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* and the *Kansas City Star*— its popularity is growing every day.

Downstairs, an unfinished basement is being slowly revamped by the "handyman" aides. One long wall already has attractive, but inexpensive, wood panelling in place. Doors and windows will be sealed; small open rooms will be converted into a snack room and a toolroom. Eventually, this will become either the main TV room or a game room perhaps with an indoor shuffleboard court.

"We're having to use every single inch of space, just to get them all in," Lora says. "Either that, or we're going to have to find bigger building, and we'd hate to do that." Doulin says he believes that if the Center had been located two blocks distant in either direction, it would have lost a large number of prospective members.

At Christmas time, the "seniors" had their own party and enjoyed their own turkey and trimmings together. They didn't forget the shut-ins, either; they packed 200 bags with chewy doughnuts, apples and oranges and little gifts made in the arts and crafts classes.

Something else special happened during the Christmas holidays. A young man drove 700 miles to play checkers with the old gentleman in the black leather cap, the one who plays simultaneous games and plays by mail with cronies in far-off places. Turns out that the old man known to his friends at the Senior Citizens Center as "Gallagher" (Jack Gallagher), is the former International Checkers Champion of the world.

—Betty L. MacNabb
Southwest Region, OEO

"Curing Junkies?"

Can it be done?

Police can't solve the problem; addiction increases anyway

Hospital cure gets a returnee rate of 97%

CAP could:

- **deal with every phase of the rehabilitation process**
- **provide for group therapy**
- **use ex-addicts as aides**
- **in the intermediate stage, use "Halfway Houses," then approved residences**
- **have help available 24 hours a day in neighborhood treatment centers**
- **employ a health educator to educate professional community, and families and friends of addicts about the problem**

THIS ARTICLE IS AN UNOFFICIAL VIEW OF HOW COMMUNITIES MIGHT IMPLEMENT A NARCOTICS PROGRAM. IT DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO REFLECT OEO POLICY.

Could CAP Cure "Junkies"?

Nobody likes a junkie—not even other junkies. Drug addicts are menaces to themselves and to the community. An addict is a sick man, but to get enough money, day after day for his "fix," he becomes a criminal. The average 'habit' costs roughly $150 a week to support, and addicts will steal and rob to get money for heroin.

The community bears the brunt of these transgressions: for it is easy arithmetic to figure out that the approximately 200,000 addicts in this country need a total of $1.5 billion each year to buy the drugs they desperately need.

One and a half *billion* dollars: —the entire budget of the Poverty War for 1966! Even if *half* of the money addicts use to purchase drugs is come by honestly, it still leaves an illicit $750 million.

Thus on a plain dollars and cents basis (not to mention the problems of health and degradation) communities cannot afford dope addicts; nor can they remain uninvolved and leave the problem of junkies to the police. For what addicts do affects everyone.

The narcotics addiction problem is staggering and so far has defied solution. The government's treatment center in Lexington, Kentucky, for example, has a 97 percent return rate. Even the controversial Synanon program (in California and Connecticut) has an "estimated" cure rate of only one in four. We say "estimated," because this privately run, privately financed group is fiercely independent and very suspicious of the government and the medical profession, because they say they want to keep completely separate from the U.S. court system.

Synanon completely cuts itself off from the community. But the addicts' return to his same environment so often triggers off reactions which pushed him toward dope in the first place that we know this facet of the treatment program is vital.

Daytop Lodge and the Ramirez program, both in New York, realize this environmental side of the prob-

lem but lack of funds and facilities hamper their efforts. Neither of the programs has the unique asset that OEO's CAP has: a national system of deep and strong ties with communities.

The $11.5 million earmarked for narcotics rehabilitation programs in the 1967 War On Poverty budget can begin the funding of comprehensive programs in the key cities affected: New York, which has about half the total number of addicts in the country, Los Angeles, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco and Washington.

CAP's unique strength, through CAA's, is that it knows the people who really need the help, because its existing programs reach deep into poverty areas where narcotics rates are high. The grass-roots work has already been done. In theory, first prerequisite for a successful Community Action narcotics program, then, is that it be headquartered in poverty neighborhoods where it is needed; not in a bureaucratic building miles away and worlds removed from the people who need help.

Ex-addicts have been singularly successful helping junkies and can be highly valuable program aides. There is much more to narcotics rehabilitation than its purely medical aspect.

The program, ideally, should deal with every phase of the narcotic addict's life in every possible way that may help. It must be all-inclusive, or it runs the danger of being ineffective.

A hypothetical program might include the following:

- a separate narcotics ward in the hospital, completely apart from the workings of the police
- a methodone maintenance program—keeping the addict on a certain kind of narcotic during and after the withdrawal stage, if necessary
- hard-hitting group therapy, and guided group intraction in the medical treatment center, relying heavily upon the experience of the ex-addict.

The treatment center could be an unpretentious, undesignated spot supervised by CAP; open from, perhaps, 9 am to 10 pm so that anyone who wanted food, recreation, or someone to talk to could have it. Professional help could be available 24 hours a day for someone in crisis.

A large portion of the program could be residential—a follow-through of the intensive medical care received in the hospital. To that end, there could be several intermediate steps until the patient shows he can handle increasing doses of independence. After the pain of withdrawal subsides, the patient may be ready for Halfway Houses, where there would be a tremendous participation by the ex-addict who has "made it."

There could be guided peer-group interaction sessions each night; gradually the patient could phase-out to group counseling one time a week.

The next step would be for people who need a drug-free setting but nothing more. Here, they could be housed in approved residences, where the only check would be the once-a-month kind, when the fact that the rent was paid was proof that the patient was accounted for.

In this kind of program run by CAP there should be people functioning on different levels.

In addition to those directly involved with the addict himself, there could be a community educator on the staff whose job it would be to educate two groups of people: the professional community—the doctors, nurses, etc., to make them more sympathetic to the program and to encourage their active participation, (an area in which they have been most reluctant to take part in up to this time), and the families and friends of the addicts.

Equally important, working with the Health Educator could be ex-addicts trained as aides. People who have emerged successfully from the dark days of addiction, know the community, and are known as "successes" among the people needing the help.

CAP's effort to win the battle against narcotics would be an all-encompassing one, where the addict's progress is at all times monitored by people whom he knows and trusts. Perhaps this is the approach best destined for success. For the real shame of the junkie is the waste it makes of his life, the toll it takes in human productivity.

Law enforcement does not solve the addiction problem alone, medicine alone does not; perhaps only by adding broad-based community participation can we have a solution to this problem.

THE TEN BIGGEST

MYTH: Head Start is just a great big, expensive babysitting program. Its cost, between $95 and $125 per month per child for the full-year program, an average of $1100 a year, is the price tag for a mink-lined private nursery school.

ANSWER: Cost of the Head Start program is high—but its goals encompass so much more than those of the nursery school. In the educational areas alone, it must do double time—so the child of poverty can "catch up" with experiences the middle class child takes for granted. Unlike the private school, Head Start is comprehensive — and education is only one part of a program which also includes:

- full medical and dental examinations for every child, something found to be brand new to most. If a deficiency is discovered, the child is directed to agencies that can do something about it.
- a full nutritional program with at least one hot meal and a snack a day—sadly, this too is a new experience for many.
- a social service program for the whole family—with frequent home visits by Head Start personnel who guide the family to local resources which exist to help—but so often, are just not known.
- parental involvement in the program—part of which includes classes for parents in home economics, sewing, typing, food budgeting and preparation, child care and language classes.
- employment opportunities for the parents as teachers' aides, monitors.

MYTH: Head Start programs are a big waste of money for such young children.

ANSWER: There is considerable evidence that the early years of childhood are the most critical point in the poverty cycle. During these years, the creation of learning patterns, emotional development, and the forming of individual aspirations take place at a very rapid pace. For the child of poverty, the foundation is laid for a pattern of failure—and thus of poverty, throughout his life. Youngsters from homes where English is not spoken well, and books are not frequently read, often have difficulty at first exposure to school in the first grade. They tend to lag further behind as they progress through school, and many drop out entirely, further hampering their ability to get and keep a job. Special programs like Head Start are designed to break that cycle—before it is set.

MYTH: It costs $9,000 a year to train one Job Corps enrollee—more than three times the cost of sending one student to a private college for one year.

ANSWER: By an act of Congress beginning July 1, 1967, the cost of training a Job Corps enrollee must be not more than $7500 per trainee, per year. Since the average length of stay is nine months, the cost is lowered to $5,625 for each enrollee. In addition to the room, and board, and schooling, this amount includes pay of $30 per month (less taxes and social security), allotments to needy dependents (75 percent of the Job Corps kids send home $25 a month, and the government matches it), medical and dental costs, clothing and transportation. College tuition represents only about one-third of the total cost of a year in college; the re-

MYTHS ABOUT OEO

mainder is made up by endowments and grants.

MYTH: The Job Corps serves only Negroes.

ANSWER: Approximately 50 percent of the Job Corps enrollees are white. This figure necessarily varies from day to day, as shown by the exact count in January which registered 54 percent of the enrollees as Negro.

MYTH: Young people in the Job Corps are from the criminal element of society. They have fights, they riot; they cause trouble in the community.

ANSWER: Of the young men and women coming into the Job Corps, 63 percent have had no previous record of any kind; 27 percent had a record of minor anti-social behavior (truancy, breaking curfews, etc.), and 10 percent had one conviction but, on the advice and urging of local authorities, they were accepted into the program. In most of the communities surrounding the 112 centers, there has been a relationship of harmony and cooperation.

In the program's early days, there was some trouble, as there is bound to be in any pioneering effort, but in the past several months, all of this has subsided. At this point, with more than 10,000 people having completed their training, 70 percent have obtained jobs at an average wage of $1.71 an hour (Before going into Job Corps, the scant number who had ever held a job were paid an average hourly wage of 80c); 21 percent have entered the armed forces (before joining the Job Corps, 2/3 of those eligible could not pass the entrance exams); the remainder have returned to school—and some have even gone on to college.

MYTH: The poor use Legal Services mostly to get divorces.

ANSWER: More than 95 percent of all Legal Services cases are concerned with cases other than divorce. Since mid-1966, Legal Services has handled about 100,000 cases involving landlord-tenant relationships, welfare problems, consumer fraud and domestic relations. Although about 35 percent of all the cases involve the latter, this category also includes adoption proceedings, cases of non-support, and guardianship problems. Only 2-3 percent of the total cases involve divorce.

MYTH: VISTA is a haven for draft dodgers.

ANSWER: Of the approximately 3,100 VISTA volunteers, 54 percent are women. Serving in VISTA does not free anyone from his draft obligations. General Louis B. Hershey, Director of the Selective Service System, has said VISTA service is "in the national interest." Under the present system, Volunteers are generally deferred while in the program but the final decision concerning the draft status is entirely up to the local draft board.

MYTH: The battle against poverty is limited to the big cities—where all the commotion is. That's where all the energy and the programs and the money is going, and it's by-passing the quiet pockets of rural poverty.

ANSWER: Rural areas have received about 21 percent of the $72 million CAP has granted for manpower-related programs in OEO's first two years: $15 million for on-the-job training pro-

grams, which places trainees in a job, and pays the employer the cost of training. There are examples all over the country of rural people being helped by government programs, and by VISTA Volunteers giving a year's service helping rural people help themselves improve their lot.

- In Arkansas, 799 people were placed in jobs in the first five months of ARDVAC, an 8-county CAA agency in Arkansas.
- In the summer of 1965, 179,000 rural preschoolers attended Head Start programs operated in 1,044 counties, under grants totaling $27.8 million.
- Medicare Alert programs were conducted by 211 rural CAAs with grants totaling almost $2 million.
- About 3,000 older persons were employed in the crash program to enroll eligible older persons in the Medicare program.
- Several hundred low-income farmers in Wisconsin will learn how to improve their incomes through the new Livestock Management and Income cooperative.

These are just a sampling of ways in which the Office of Economic Opportunity is touching the lives of the rural poor.

MYTH: The Community Action Program is a giveaway, a handout.

ANSWER: The CAP program is just the opposite of a dole—because it asks people to help themselves.

The Federal government's financial assistance to local communities depends upon that community's determination to mobilize its own public and private resources and to develop programs of sufficient scope and size which give promise of helping to eliminate the causes of poverty.

CAP programs may include • manpower and job development projects • adult education programs • tutorial services • Upward Bound programs, which motivate gifted high school students from low-income areas towards college.

Federal money is available to finance projects such as these, to train people to work in such programs, and for special research and pilot projects—but there is no "handout," there is no "giveaway"—unless that handout is named "opportunity."

MYTH: There is a lot of waste at OEO because there are so many "chiefs" and so few "Indians."

ANSWER: Little more than 1 percent of the anti-poverty budget goes for salaries. In 1966, Congress authorized OEO to spend up to $18,006,000 for salaries, out of a total appropriation of $1.5 billion.

The Office of Economic Opportunity stands low in the government totem pole of average GS Grade Comparsions with other agencies. OEO's average grade of 9.5 is lower than the Bureau of the Budget's 11.4, the Office of Emergency Planning's 11.4, the FAA's (Research and Development) 10.9; the Civil Defense's 10.5, NASA's 10.3, the Civil Aeronautics Board's 10.2, the Rural Electrification Administration's 9.8, and the Internal Revenue Service's (Internal Audit and Security) 9.8.

The average salary of OEO permanent employees, as of May 1, 1966, is GS 9.09 (about $7500); for temporary employees, it's GS 4.97, (about $5000.)

In addition, the War on Poverty makes extensive use of volunteers: in Head Start last year, for example, 100,000 full-time volunteers worked at centers every day, 400,000 worked part-time, and 50,000 doctors, dentists, nurses and other professionals donated their services.

—Deborah Wager

RURAL SELF-HELP HOUSING IN APPALACHIA

Drive way up Buck Creek Road in Macon County, North Carolina. Go at night. That way you'll get the full drama of something completely new to backwoods Appalachia.

You'll pass mile after unpaved mile of the usual darkened cabins and houses that quarter most of the Creek's thirty-odd families. Then you'll come to a surprising nighttime sight—a handful of men, swinging hammers and operating power saws under the glare of some bare bulbs, building a new house.

One of these men will be Frank Houston. Frank and four of his Buck Creek Road neighbors are trying to break through the hard chain of poverty that has gripped their lives as far back as they can remember. They're starting their fight by building new houses for their families; and they are doing it together through a new, exciting self-help program.

Frank Houston and his family of seven live in a crumbling log cabin atop a knoll off Buck Creek Road. Frank's grandfather built it as a one-room affair, but Frank somehow partitioned it into four small rooms, including the smoky kitchen he added at the rear. The only window in the living room sits so low to the ground you would have to stoop to see out. Perhaps the cabin has sunk into the earth with age. The front door is flush with the ground; wind carries dirt and dust in every time one of the six active Houston children comes or goes. In 1965 Frank fed his big family on only $3,800 earned as a rock mason and sometime carpenter.

"We sure are looking forward to moving into our new house," beams Frank's chubby and cheerful wife, stopping for a moment to talk with us while fixing supper for her big brood. Mrs. Houston is embarrassed about their cabin and won't let outside visitors see but one room. An old television set sits in the corner, plugged in at the ceiling along with every other electrical connection in the house. An old bicycle rim perches on a tall pole outside the house, trying to pull the TV signal over the mountains down into the rocky valley.

"It's sometimes 10:30 or 11:00 before Frank gets home of a night now," she adds. "And it's even later before he gets to bed." Frank stops by for a quick supper before his neighbor and employer, Bob Callaway, toots the horn of his pickup truck about six o'clock. They rumble down the dusty road together for four hours of work on a new house with their teammates. One week they might be working on Frank's house, another week on Everett Barnes', and another week on Fred Woodall's. When a construction phase is completed on one house, they move on to the next, rotating their work so all the houses will be finished at about the same time.

This way each man gets to see progress made on his own home at regular intervals and all the families will be able to leave their present substandard dwellings for the new houses together. And it won't be long before they are all finished.

The work was started last August 8, when five Macon County families closed special self-help loans with their county Farmers Home Administration supervision. The five men each borrowed $6,000 (except one who borrowed only $5,500) for 33 years to pay for the building materials for their three-bedroom, completely modern new homes. Each will have a central oil furnace, twenty-seven electrical outlets, hot running water, complete kitchens and bathrooms. Instead of

a cloudy, low peephole in her living room, Mrs. Houston will be able to look out on Buck Creek through a big picture window.

The five men provide the labor for their own homes, which normally would cost as much as $8,500 each. Because none of them are experienced builders, they work in two small teams under the full-time supervison of professional contractors, hired and paid as "lead men" by the Macon Program for Progress, the county's anti-poverty agency.

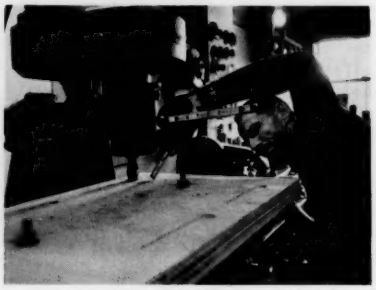
The Self-Help Housing Project was the brainchild of Harold Warstler, the Deputy Director of Macon Program for Progress. A young and energetic worker with the experience of personally constructing three houses of his own, Warstler sees inadequate housing as a key to the poverty program in Macon County. Warstler reasons that if a poor family can be helped out of their cramped and depressing home environment, they might then be better able to take advantage of some other phases of the poverty program. "There is nothing a man takes more pride in than a home he has built with his own hands," says Warstler. "A modern, comfortable, clean place to live can influence a man's whole attitude toward himself."

Warstler felt that traditional mountain independence and weak sense of community were among the main obstacles to Appalachia's poor. If they could not be gotten together to build better roads or apply for educational programs, perhaps they could be interested in a cooperative house-building project which would show a relatively quick, direct personal pay-off. In other words, native human self-interest could be tapped in such a way as to produce cooperation and good community spirit.

The first problem was financing. In August 1965, Warstler approached the Farmers Home Administration and found that FHA did have new funds designed for just the kind of self-help project he had in mind. FDA would lend money at a special four percent interest rate to people normally ineligible because their incomes were too low. The loans are repayable in 33 years with the first payment deferred for one year.

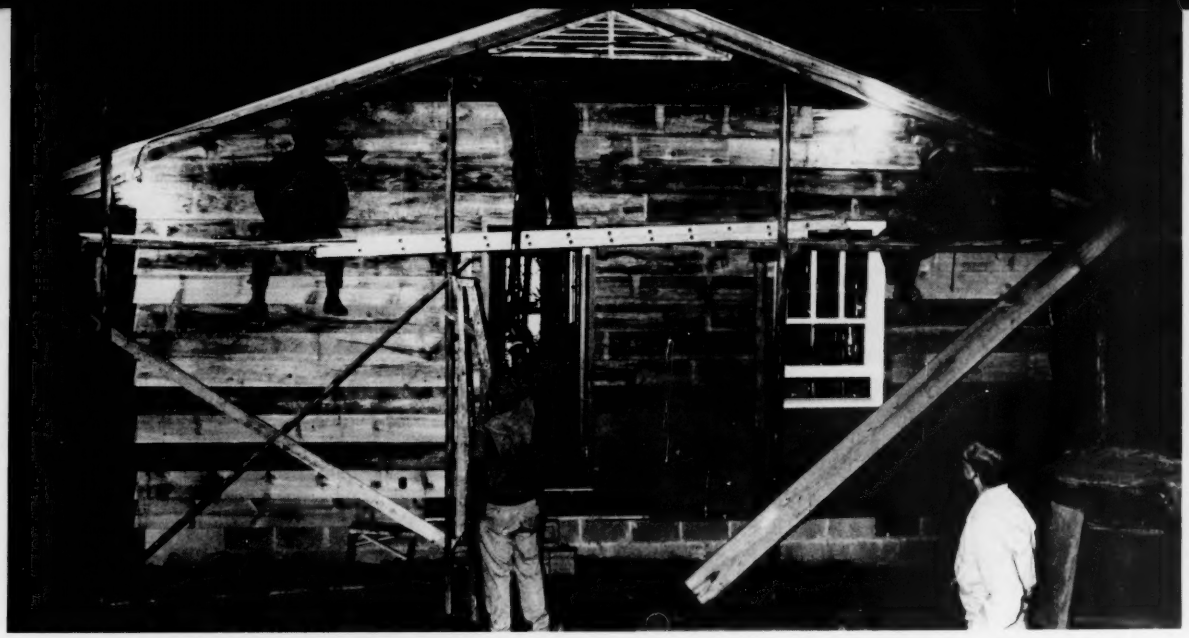
The next problem was to provide leadership, because most of the men lacked the skills to build homes on their own. For money to hire the "lead men" Warstler submitted a proposal to the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Both the FHA and OEO then wanted Warstler to organize the interested parties and show that they would indeed be able to take on the project. The whole idea sounded good to the federal agencies, but was it realistic to expect abjectly impoverished mountaineers, unaccustomed to long-term debts and cooperative community projects, to work every night for ten months in the cold and then make regular monthly payments on their loans for 33 years.



Warstler thought it was. He was convinced that with proper supervision and encouragement, people with low incomes and a history of unreliability could surpass all past performances, especially when working for their own families' well-being.

It took many months of legwork



for Warstler to get a group of families together and obtain official approval. Referrals were coming in through the poverty program's neighborhood workers and Visiting Service Guides. Many a night he drove the dark, winding backroads to small meetings and described the self-help idea to interested groups.

Then there were many delays from above. It was June 1966, before OEO approved funds for supervision and administration and not until August that FHA finally signed the loans. In the meantime some families became discouraged and dropped out. One moved away. One man became so impatient he started buying materials with his savings and began a type of construction on his own that would not be approved by FHA standards. Warstler finally talked him into waiting a while longer. One night, after what seemed to him the umpteenth m e e t i n g he had attended, another man came up and asked, "Harold, are we really going to build houses or just talk about it?"

A few months later that man saw foundations being poured for four new houses on Buck Creek Road. What seemed like a dream at first, and then a good idea faced with almost insurmountable hurdles for months, had finally moved into the action stage. Although Warstler had wanted to start 25 families on self-help housing, he was understandably elated when five picked up their hammers and began work on August 8, 1966.

Why was house-building a good way to start the war on poverty along Buck Creek? In a county where 56 percent of the families live on less than $3,000 per year, inadequate housing always has been a screaming problem. E v e r e t t Barnes' wife, for instance, has to go outside for everything—to the coalpile for heating, to the spring-pipe for water, to the woodpile for cooking and to the outdoor privy for sanitation. Her small children must descend a steep, rocky slope to the edge of Buck Creek Road where the school bus picks them up. Five people have a total of two rooms to live in.

Besides getting a new house, each man is getting invaluable on-the-job training in building skills. Some could carpenter before, but they did not qualify for good wintertime jobs as master carpenters. During the summer, with the influx of the "Floridy people" and transients, a Macon County man can get work in construction or service trades and his wife can work in homes or motels as a domestic. But the winter hits hard in Appalachia when tourism withers in the fall. The climate attacks harder and the costs (medicine, clothes, heating) rise faster for mountain people as the days grow shorter. That's one of the reasons why so many Macon Countians stay poor year after year.

Now a man like Frank Houston will not have to idle away his winter days when rock masonry dies out in September. He can go into the job market as a good carpenter with the experience of building his own and two of his neighbors' houses behind him. Along with carpentry, the homebuilders are learning plumbing, wiring and cabinet-making.

The spirit of cooperative house-building has made its mark on Buck Creek and its loosely-knit community which stretches over 16 winding miles through the mountains. It's a long drive to Highlands or Franklin, North Carolina, the county seat, and the only sense of community ever felt on this creek before was in one of the

churches along the way. The people were distrustful and apathetic when poverty workers tried to interest them in new programs.

The self-help housing idea has broken some of their reserve. The five wives are getting together to quilt, make curtains and discuss the interior color schemes of their houses with the Home Demonstration Agent. They are looking forward to seeing the Rural Sanitation Agent and Hygiene Aid from the Health Department to talk about child care, their new plumbing systems and family health problems. The seeds of change and cooperative effort have been planted in this handful of people on a back creek Macon County road.

Instead of always working for outsiders—the summertime Florida visitors and ever-transient tourists —some Macon Countians are working for themselves now. New houses are being built *by* and *for* natives of Buck Creek and not for outsiders who want summer cottages as has been the case in the past.

Other people have gotten interested in the self-help idea as a result. Warstler hopes to sponsor five more houses with OEO funds. He hopes to find the right homebuilders and help them obtain the FHA loans before long.

"This sure is a good way for a poor man to get a house," opines Fred Woodall. "In fact it's about the only way." We stood beside a smoky fire he had built to keep that night. Around the corner Bob and Frank and Everett were putting up the last weatherboards on his house.

"We can go indoors now to work on the walls and ceilings. It's going to be paneled in the kitchen and living room, with sheetwork on the other walls. It sure will be nice when we can move in," smiled Fred.

"He'll probably be able to do that," says Warstler," before summer."

We stood under the stars on a cold mountain night last winter. Behind us loomed mountains like Big Hogback and Painter, Cole and Black Rock. The air seemed charged with a kind of electric spirit. The saws sang, and the hammers barked into the still night. People passing on the road slowed down to see what was going on. Many knew by now and wanted to see how the work was coming.

—PETER RANGE

A NEW VOICE IN EDUCATION

Head Start parents help plan progress

Following a very successful summer program, a public school sponsor in Long Island reported that, for the first time, more than 25 percent of the parents attended the parents' meeting of the kindergarten class. In fact, attendance reached 75 percent. When the parents were given an opportunity to ask questions, they went like this:

"Can we have a parents' group, like in Head Start?"

"Can the fathers come to school too, like in Head Start?"

"Can the parents come into the classrooms, like in Head Start?"

"Can we have parents working with the teachers, like in Head Start?"

"Will the teachers come to the homes and talk with us about our children, like in Head Start?"

The local school superintendant commented dryly: "This is a school system which will never be the same, having had a Head Start program."

A new generation of parents is struggling to make itself heard across the country. Its voice is sometimes faint and halting, quiet and unsure. But on this occasion in Long Island, it was a strong voice, firmly asking questions which had important and significant answers. This generation of parents, the Head Start parents, is the first to be an integral part of the planning of its children's early education. It is the first to be invited to communicate freely, face to face, with the people in whose care his child is placed during the day.

It is the first to be given a chance to learn from a child development program how to become a more useful citizen in the community.

How is this coming about?

In the Head Start Program, parents constitute one-half of each center's advisory committee. They serve as non-professional aides to teachers, social workers and administrators. They represent probably the finest consultants the professionals ever had. (Who understands a child's needs better than his parents? Who, better than his parents, knows the mental bruises suffered daily by a child of poverty, and how these affect his behavior?)

Parents come to the centers to see what their children can do, and what can be done for their children. They learn ways in which they can extend right into the home the benefits received by their children in the classroom.

Head Start parents often go back to school themselves. Arranged by the parent coordinator, they attend classes and discussion groups in home economics, sewing, budgeting, the preparation of low-cost food, adult education and child care.

Parent participation is one of the five basic ingredients that makes up Project Head Start. It is the ingredient without which the program cannot succeed. But it is the hardest ingredient to make effective, successful and meaningful. To countless thousands of parents from poverty backgrounds, school is an alien place; teachers, social workers, administrators are, at worst, an enemy; at best, an automation with no human understanding or time to listen. No one has ever listened or cared before. Why should they listen or care now, in Head Start? This traditional attitude presents communications barriers which cannot be overcome in a day.

On the other side of the coin, many individuals and communities find parent involvement in a program of this nature hard to accept. Many local leaders are horrified at the thought of the poor helping to make decisions in anti-poverty programs. They want to do something *for* them, and *to* them, but not *with* them.

Many directors did not take kindly to the idea of giving parents—especially disadvantaged parents—any actual control over what the directors felt to be essentially an educational (in other words, "their") project. Parent participation was seen as a threat to power rather than as an aid to problem solving.

"Parent participation in the classroom?" A New England Head Start director was incredulous. "Touching, but irrelevant," commented a head nun in Louisiana. "Too many cooks spoil the broth," said a Massachusetts director.

This was the attitude toward participation often found by OEO's Office of Inspection, during last summer's eight-week program. Of 424 grantees visited, 213 projects were listed as deficient in the four main areas of parent involvement. Only 36 of the programs were listed as strong in this area.

Interestingly enough, out of the 36 strong programs, 19 were listed as being outstanding in every phase of activity. Most revealing of all: every program that had an effective parent advisory board was found to be free of major defects.

"It's an authoritarian attitude," said one OEO inspector. "Years of dealing with the problems of disadvantaged children and parents, in a framework designed for nice, manageable middle-class types, has produced negative habits of thought. When you haven't got the means at your disposal to solve problems constructively, you solve them by saying 'no.' That gets to be quite a habit after 20 years of struggling to maintain law and order in classrooms."

Some Community Action Agencies are, themselves, among those who turn a deaf ear when the voice of the New Generation tries to make itself heard. They *should* be, rather, in the vanguard of those who assist and encourage the voice. Community Action Agencies have the jurisdiction and the capabilities to help the New Generation reach its goal.

The Head Start parents, long after their children have graduated from the child development program, have a common interest and a common purpose: to seize every opportunity that comes their way for ensuring that the cold, comfortless blanket of poverty does not engulf their children. They are often not passive parents, they are articulate and anxious to learn.

Community Action Agencies throughout the country have a unique opportunity to build up this new interest and enthusiasm by strengthening the parent involvement in Head Start, by the introduction of adult education and job training programs.

Furthermore, many of these parents, used now to working in groups for home and community purposes, have talents and skills which would be of great value in other projects and programs. It is the responsibility of CAA's to make sure that the voices heard in the Long Island parents' meeting are encouraged and broadcast, that they are used to good purpose and, above all, that they are not permitted to fall silent because no one would listen.

—BESSIE DRAPER
Parent Participation Specialist
Project Head Start

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